



**Joint Committee of Education  
Public Hearing Testimony  
In support of S.B. 229 and H.B. 5283**

**March 4, 2022**

Chairs McCrory and Sanchez, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty, and distinguished members of the Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Ruben Felipe, and I am the Executive Director of Connecticut Charter Schools Association. CTCSA represents the nearly 11,000 students who attend Connecticut's 21 public charter schools. I am here to express our support for two bills, SB 229 and HB 5283 both align with our organization's mission to advocate for equitable and long-term solutions to the issues charter schools face.

- Before I begin I'd like to thank this committee and its leadership for
- Tonight you have heard from students, parents, teachers, and community leaders from many of our school communities as well as our friends in Danbury who we stand in solidarity with.

**S.B. 229 - An Act Concerning the Charter School Approval Process**

This bill modifies the current statute enacted in 2015 that requires a 2-step certification process for all new charter schools in Connecticut. The current process has denied thousands of families, like the ones in Danbury access to high quality public school options, it is time to address this policy. *S.B. 229* creates a nonlapsing account in the General Fund that will sanction SDE to fund charters that have been approved by the State Board of Education. This addition will expedite the process of opening new public charter schools that meet the needs of many of our kids. Furthermore, CTCSA offers a recommendation to this legislation. We recommend eliminating the disconcerted 2-step certification process by allowing schools to receive their charter upon approval by the State Board of Education as it was before 2015. The current system is broken and is being utilized to deny choice to mostly black and brown families. Please modify and advance SB 229

**H.B. 5283 - An Act Concerning the Education Cost Sharing Grant Formula and the Funding of Other Education Programs**

There is a \$713 million racial funding gap in our state's public school education that affects more than 40,000 students across the state including the nearly 11,000 students who attend Connecticut's 21 public charter schools. Meanwhile our state government touts that we are in the best fiscal shape that we have ever been, yet these dollars are not making their way to those that need it most. We



have a \$3.1 billion rainy day fund and a projected \$2.5 billion surplus in this year's budget. When will we begin investing some of these dollars where it can make a huge difference— in education?

HB 5283 would adopt a student-centered funding formula that centers on mitigating the racial and economic gaps in education funding for all public school students. The shift in focus to student-centered funding would create a system that actually takes into account the needs of Connecticut's students. As opposed to the current system that discriminates by race, income and public school type.

For years, we have been told that we could address the inequities in our communities if only we had the money. So why do we still hear “no” as the answer? What message are we sending our kids about their value in the eyes of our state? We have the opportunity to make structural changes that directly impact the future trajectory of our state. I ask that you support passage of these bills.

Thank you for your consideration.

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